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ABSTRACT

A study was done to determine student attitudes towards their experience in the practicum component of the graduate program at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work (UCONN). The program lasts 2 years and the hypothesis was that students had the same level of satisfaction for both years. A questionnaire was developed and sent to 248 first and second year students. The instrument asked 25 demographic questions, 13 Likert scale questions and one open-ended question for other comments. Fifty-one percent responded, and of those, 46 percent were first year students and 54 percent were second year students. Analysis of responses indicated the groups were comparable with no significant attitudinal differences toward the field experience. Attitudinal comparisons were also made about supervision and advisement, with no statistically significant differences between the two classes. The questionnaire is appended. (Contains 16 references.) (JB)

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AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ATTITUDES REGARDING THE FIELD EDUCATION PRACTICUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Research Methodology

ED350918

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A Practicum Report presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

May, 1992

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Abstract of a Practicum Report Presented to Nova University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ATTITUDES REGARDING THE FIELD EDUCATION PRACTICUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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The nature of the problem was that at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work (UCONN), no formal assessment procedures existed for students to rate their practicum experience, practicum supervision or faculty advisement. Such information was obtained through discussions with their advisors. Accordingly, it was believed that second year students were more satisfied than were first year students.

The purpose of this practicum was to determine student attitudes and assess whether there was a significant difference between classes. The research hypothesis was: "There is no difference between first and second year students in reference to their levels of satisfaction."

A questionnaire was developed and sent to 248 first and second year students. A 51.2% response was received. The means were analyzed by the Z-test. The two groups were comparable. Attitudinal comparisons were made about satisfaction with the practicum, supervision, and advisement

by using 2 x 2 tables and the Chi-square test. Again, there were no statistically significant differences between the two classes.

The conclusions were that first and second year students did not differ from each other and were generally satisfied with the field experience and advisement. Second, through this process, baseline data was obtained which will form the basis of a report to the faculty, administration, student body, and agencies.

The implications are that specific planning can be initiated, based on the further analysis of the findings. A more factual process for the collection of data has been initiated which will have an impact on institutional change.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Social work education is experiencing increasing difficulty adapting to a constantly changing society. Similar to other educationally-based professions, it has been influenced by social problems such as the AIDS epidemic, substance abuse, and homelessness. The recession has had an effect on schools of social work and the social agencies used as practicum sites. Staff reductions of agency supervisors, some of whom educated social work students, has had an impact on higher education.

Nature of the Problem

The nature of the problem concerns the fact that social work students are required to do two practica in social agencies. At the practicum agencies, they are educationally supervised while working with clients, groups, and social organizations. The method of determining their satisfaction with their practicum, supervision, and faculty advisement has been through informal discussions with academic advisors. Quantifiable data was collected about student attitudes.

Purpose

The purpose of this practicum study was to use an ex-post facto research design and a questionnaire to collect

data from students at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work (UCONN). The treatment had already occurred in that first and second year social work students were completing their practicum work when this study was done. A pre-test was not administered at the beginning of the academic year.

The first dependent variable concerned student satisfaction with their practicum placement. The second concerned their satisfaction with the practicum supervision. The third concerned their faculty advisement satisfaction.

An independent variable was the age of the students. A second was their status as first or second year students. A third set of independent variables concerned the fact that practicum sites and the practicum instructors were approved by the faculty at UCONN. Social work interventions taught and supervised in the practica (casework, groupwork, community organization, policy and planning, and administration) were the approved methods of the school.

One of the informal opinions at UCONN was that second year students were generally thought to be more satisfied with their practicum than first year students. This study was done to determine whether there was, in fact, a significant difference between the satisfaction levels of first and second year students.

Significance to the Institution

The significance to the institution was that a study based upon the analysis of factual data could produce assist

with If there were major differences between two groups of students, the school could initiate changes that would have an impact on student attitude. Also, if a significant difference was not found, then establishing a formal evaluation procedure was valuable in and of itself.

The higher education literature supports the use of institutional studies. Valliant and Valliant (1985) include materials which emphasize the importance of student satisfaction research to educational institutions.

The relationship of the practicum topic was appropriate for the Research Seminar since a literature review was done, a research hypothesis was developed, a questionnaire was prepared and sent out, plus the data was analyzed through inferential statistics. The practicum was also related to concepts from the "Curriculum and Planning Seminar," "Governance and Management Seminar," as well as to the seminar on "Human resource Development."

Research Questions

The first research question was: "How satisfied are the first and second year social work students with their practicum experience?" A second question was: "How satisfied are they with their supervision at the agencies?" Finally, how satisfied are they with the faculty advisor?" Related to this was the question as to how comparable the two groups of students were to each other.

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis was: "There is no statistically significant difference between first and second year practicum students regarding their levels of satisfaction concerning three key areas, their practicum, supervision, and advisement experiences." Statistical tests were used to measure the three areas of satisfaction and the comparability of the two groups with each other.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The material in this chapter concerns the background information about social work, field education, and student attitudes. That material was selected to develop a conceptual frame of reference about student satisfaction. From that frame of reference, the questionnaire was developed.

The first literature review was requested through the Nova Information and Retrieval Service. Topics searched included "student satisfaction," "field education," "practicum," and "social work education." Additional materials were identified in library searches at the University of Connecticut and Central Connecticut State University. National conference proceedings, social work journals and recent text books on field education were read to identify materials related to the central concepts.

Concepts Regarding Social Work Education

Recently, social work education has experienced some ambiguity in this country about where it is heading. Glazer (1986:73) notes:

> The diversification of the work force has been linked to confusion about the meaning of the M.S.W. New criteria for the rapid entry of B.S.W.'s, outside pressures from human service occupations, and the elimination of Title XX and various public programs have created competition between B.S.W.'s and M.S.W.'s and confusion about their respective skills and roles.

To draw some inferences about the changing nature of national social work education, a focus was developed on class room and field education. The practicum portion of social work education consists of two required apprenticeships in which students are assigned to social agencies to practice under supervision concurrently with their classroom studies. Through the educational supervision in the practicum, students are expected to integrate theoretical concepts with practice approaches.

Concerning this process, Schneck (1991:17) notes:

> The expressed goals of the apprenticeship, field work, field instruction, or field education as it has been variously called over the last century reveal a core statement of the overall purpose of social work education as they seem portraits in time of cherished ideals cast against the backdrop of the realities of the day. As we struggle with our current realities in teaching and administering field programs, we necessarily act within our particularistic spheres of influence, demands and resources, perhaps recalling our own experiences as a field student.

He describes the interrelationship between universities and social agencies which attempted to integrate classroom theory with the teaching of "practical subjects" as far back as the 1890's. Out of that relationship, some tensions have arisen over the years. Schools often believe that agencies should be more theoretically inclined while agencies think that schools should be more pragmatic.

Concepts Regarding Field Education

Recently, writers have highlighted the importance of practicum in social work education. Works from several are cited below.

National Authors

In a conference paper, Schneck (1992:1) again comments on the importance of field education:

> It is well-recognized by all, certainly not the least, our students, that field education is a vital and cherished part of the curriculum. No other component commands such attention, energy, and resources, nor occupies such a place of importance in the practice community as well as the schools as field education....In field education, we have the opportunity to promote and develop services to individuals, families, and the diverse social groups extant in society. Those can include services to refugee and homeless populations; resources and supports to families of all kinds; community programs for the mentally ill, the elderly, and the physically handicapped; community development efforts in local neighborhoods; support and self-help groups for disadvantaged and oppressed populations; housing and economic development programs; and the creation of community support resources for those who have been denied or have lost traditional social supports. Whether through private or public auspices, storefronts or mental hospitals, hospitals or hospices, prisons or schools, this has been and will continue to be our mission and our life's work. This commitment represents nothing less than our altruistic and pragmatic reason for being.

He concludes by advocating the development of a network of field education directors in Canada and the United States. This organization would serve as a support to schools of social work and would maintain the educational standards for student practicum teaching in a time of great societal change.

Skolnick is another nationally-known author who studies the field education process. From recent surveys, she (1988:47) cites a number of common concerns field educators raise in the present climate of rapid change that have had an impact on student attitudes:

Findings indicated striking agreement between field educators and agency personnel about problematic areas: the integration of academic content and field experience; conflicting demands of job and field instruction responsibilities for standards for the evaluation of students, training for new and experienced field instructors; communication between schools and agencies; and the qualification and needs of students.

Concepts Regarding Student Satisfaction

Moving to the studies about student satisfaction with field education, Sinecrope and Cournoyer (1990) compare thirty-one master's degree student ratings of their social work field instructor's behavior with field instructor self-reports. They find that student ratings are more strongly associated with their global satisfaction than with instructor self-reports. They note that more studies about the practicum are needed.

A recent study by Abrahamson and Fortune (1990) focuses on the impact of training for the practicum supervisors as an indicator of how satisfied students are. Their findings are that the students are most satisfied in those cases where the practicum instructors receive post-master's degree instruction and are comfortable with integrating theory and practice.

An observation by Mesbur and Glassman (1990:56) suggests that studies of student satisfaction are complicated by: "the lack of proper action-research tools for the understanding of how practice is performed in the practice world."

By way of comparison, several of the findings by Raskin (1990) identify a number of factors which contribute directly to student dissatisfaction. These include "red tape," bureaucratic issues and staff tension in agencies experiencing changes at this time.

Canadian Authors

Finally, two Canadian authors, Vayda and Bogo (1991:271) suggest that most students are bound to experience some dissatisfaction because:

> Integration of theory and practice is always an objective of professional education. In reality, social work students frequently experience a discontinuity when they move from the classroom into the practicum. Many concepts learned in the classroom seem difficult to apply in practice and appear irrelevant to learning practice skills. A teaching model that can be presented both in the classroom and field is described in this article. Students can apply this model, which is relevant to both micro and macro settings, in diverse practice settings.

Their design of an integration program included cognitive linkage on a systemic basis. This is very similar to the "context-input-process-product" (CIPP) model discussed in the Nova seminars on curriculum, research and governance (Isaac and Michael, 1990:6). The authors term this the "Integration of Theory and Practice Loop" (ITP). The model involves a circular pattern of "data retrieval, reflection, linkage, professional response," in a never-ending series of loops. Their model applies cybernetic theory directly to practicum education. It is also similar to the curriculum development model cited in the text by Ornstein and Hunkins (1988:199).

Vayda and Bogo (1991:278) conclude with the following thought:

> The ITP Loop model for social work education promotes unification of classroom and field. It applies reflective and cognitive processes to specific practice situations drawn from a variety of social work settings and compels students and instructors to use these processes in determining possible interventions and responses. A desirable outcome would be the establishment of a cooperative and critical tension between classroom and field that would nourish both education and practice. Educational cooperation and practice integration may encourage incremental structural change and client empowerment.

Summary

The literature review focused on social work education. Concepts were identified from studies and conference papers regarding social work, field education and student satisfaction. Also, concepts in the literature were reviewed concerning to problem formulation and measurement (Rubin and Babbie, 1989:70). These were related to the assessment of student attitudes toward the practicum at UCONN.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

An extensive search of the literature was conducted to provide a conceptual framework for this study. A text on research and questionnaire design was reviewed (Rubin and Babbie, 1989) and a text on statistics was read (Weinbach and Grinnell, 1987). The text used for the NOVA research seminar was reviewed (Isaac and Michael, 1990). Notes for future studies were taken.

Data Collection

Sample

A stratified sampling technique was used in which a questionnaire was sent to 248 full-time first and second year students in the field practicum at UCONN. Of that number, 127 (51.2 percent) responded to the questionnaire.

The respondents included 45.66 percent first year students and 53.54 percent second year students; one student did not give their age. Also, not every question was answered by the respondents who returned the questionnaire. Of the respondents, eighty-five percent were female and fifteen percent were male. The age range was between twenty-four and fifty-eight years.

The races of the participants were: eighty-two percent Caucasian, seven percent African-American, one percent

African, three percent West Indian, six percent Hispanic, and two percent Asian. No one checked "other."

Students in the part-time, continuous registration, no field, and extended degree programs were excluded from the sample. That group had 135 first and second year students.

Instrument

Based upon the texts reviewed and discussions with the Local Research Advisor (LRA), an initial hypothesis was developed and a questionnaire was prepared. Revisions were based on written materials and suggestions concerning the design of questionnaires (Edelstein, 1992).

The questionnaire was discussed with two research faculty members at UCONN for internal validation. It was discussed with the Field Education Advisory Committee of the School. A field test was conducted with twenty-five students for further validation.

The questionnaire was developed in the final form (See Appendix A). This was a questionnaire which contained twenty-five demographic questions regarding age, gender, race/ethnicity, major, minor, and year in the program. Thirteen Likert scale questions were used with the responses: "Strongly Agree," "Somewhat Agree," "Undecided," "Somewhat Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree. One open-ended question was used for other comments.

The questionnaire and a stamped return envelope were sent to the sample. After two weeks, a follow-up mailing was made to all students to insure a high rate of return.

Experimental and Control Treatments

In this case, an ex-post facto design was used since the subjects had almost completed their practica for the year. A pre-test had not been done in the Fall. First and second year students had the same treatment which was an approved practicum for two semesters, approved educational supervision and faculty advisement from the school.

Scoring

A calculator was used to do the scoring which was based on the responses to questionnaire. Answers about student satisfaction with the field practicum, field supervision, and faculty advisement were tabulated separately by class for analysis by Chi-square.

Raw data was grouped concerning the ages of first and second year students. A comparison of the means of the two classes was made by the Z-test due to the fact that there were thirty-six response ages in the range between twenty-two and fifty-eight . Data was analyzed using a statistical program: "Statistics on Software" (Timko and Downie, 1991).

Data Presentation

The data was analyzed and presented in tabular format. Three tables were used to illustrate the Chi-square findings on the three specific questions relating to student satisfaction with various portions of their field practicum experience. The comparison of the means of the ages of the students by the Z-test results were also presented in tabular format.

Treatment of Data

Null Hypotheses

The first null hypothesis was that there was no statistically significant difference between first and second year students regarding their satisfaction with the practicum. This was measured by a specific question: "My field placement met all of my expectations." The responses were tested by the Chi-square comparing the answers of the two classes of students.

The second null hypothesis was that there was no statistically significant difference between first and second year students regarding their satisfaction with their practicum supervision. This was measured by a question: "The agency supervision I received was of great assistance." The answers to this question were measured by the Chi-square.

The third hypothesis concerns faculty advisement and the students' satisfaction with it. The null hypothesis was that there was no statistically significant difference between first and second year students. The question was: "My faculty advisor at school was of great assistance to me in reference to my field placement." The responses to this question were also measured by the Chi-square test.

The fourth area of inquiry was to test whether the means of the ages of the first year students and the second year students were comparable. The null hypothesis was that there was no statistically significant difference between the means of the two classes of students. In this case, the

means were tested by the Z-test rather than the T-test because of the large sample statistical procedure.

Alternate Hypotheses

The alternate hypothesis concerns an unknown population parameter that could be in opposition to the stated hypothesis. This concerns the possibility that there could be differences in the satisfaction levels of the second year students based on the fact that they were completing their second practicum. Thus, they would be closer to the completion of the degree program than the first year students would be. Tentatively, this would be assumed to be false but if it were not, it could lead to a Type II error.

In the case of the first null hypothesis, students might be less satisfied with the agency based on lack of experience with agency placement for the first year students. Second year students might be affected by the carry-over from the experience they had had in their first year placement.

Similarly, an alternate hypothesis for first and second year students regarding agency supervision would be related to other supervisory experiences first year students had had before they came to school. Second year students might base their responses upon the experiences they had had with supervision during their first year practicum.

Faculty advisement satisfaction could be affected by experiences students had had with faculty advisors at the undergraduate level. The same obtains for second year

students and could be affected by the advisement they had received during their first year of graduate school.

The Z-test findings could have rejected a null hypothesis. This might result from age range differences between the two classes, if there were any.

Level of Significance

All of the tests were administered at the .05 level of significance. This was a standard measure of significance for the variables involved and is commonly used in social work research.

Region of Rejection

The region of rejection of the Z-test was defined by a significance level of .05. The predicted direction of the outcome of the results was two-tailed. In this case, the critical value was -1.960000. In the case of all three Chi-square tests, the region of rejection was < 3.841000.

Statistical Tests

Following the tabulation of data from the questionnaire, the findings were analyzed using inferential statistical tests. The means of ages of the students were compared through the use of a Z-test of independent means at the .05 level of significance.

The Chi-square test was used to determine cross tabulations between first and second year students regarding their satisfaction with field education, the field instructor, and the advisor. The responses from the first and second year students were separated. From the Likert

scale questionnaire, the answers (1 and 2) "strongly agree," and "somewhat agree" were grouped together by class. Similarly, the answers (4 and 5) "somewhat disagree," and "strongly disagree" were also grouped together by class. The four sets of responses provided the data for analysis in several 2 x 2 Chi-square tables. The "undecided" responses were reported separately.

The findings concerning student satisfaction with the field practicum, the field supervision, and the faculty advisement were compared through the use of the Chi-square test at the .05 level of significance. The results were presented in tabular format. A summary will be written to report the findings to the faculty, administration, student body and the agencies as part of a departmental report next fall. The results will be discussed with the Field Education Advisory Committee.

Definition of Terms

To define the terms used in this study, "field education," "practicum," and "internship" referred to the portion of the curriculum in which students were placed at social agencies for an applied portion of their professional studies. Similarly, the term "field instructor," "field supervisor," and "practicum instructor" were synonymous. That term concerns the supervisor who provided education in the field agency. "Advisor" or "faculty advisor" refers to a faculty member who provided academic advice to practicum.

Of the total student body, those students who do not take a practicum are in the "extended degree program" which allows up to four years to complete the degree. These students do not take the practicum each year as do full-time students who complete the program in two years.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions that applied to this study. First, it was assumed that the questionnaire was a valid and reliable tool that would include data relevant to the purpose of this study but would not be limited by it. Another assumption was that the questions were clear and understandable to the respondents. It was also assumed that the questionnaire was of enough interest to the students to provide enough information to be analyzed.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations which were related to the assumptions. First, a pre-test was not administered last Fall. Comparisons between the two classes would be made on an ex-post facto basis.

Second, students might not wish to complete another attitudinal questionnaire at this time of year. Many would be completing degree requirements and might choose to ignore the questionnaire.

Third, a non-return might also indicate some dissatisfaction. If so, the results of the study might be biased toward a higher level of satisfaction than is actually the case.

Time is a factor which could be a limitation. First year students would have completed two semesters of the field practicum while second year students would have completed four semesters of practicum education. This also might result in a more positive attitudes of second year students who would graduate within several weeks.

Finally, another limitation was that the findings were particularly related to the present situation of UCONN in Connecticut at this time. External controls could not be maintained for what unknown effect the various budgetary influences in the area may have on individual agencies or field instructors and how that potentially could affect student attitudes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The literature review was completed and organized around three major concepts: (1) social work education, (2) field education, and (3) student satisfaction. Concepts fidentified in the literature search provided background necessary for the creation of the survey instrument. After a questionnaire was sent to the sample, the data was analyzed.

Outcomes

The outcomes from the study produced data for analysis. Each null hypothesis was tested by a specific question and each question was analyzed by a statistical test.

The following are the findings of how the practicum students responded to various items on the questionnaire regarding their satisfaction with the practicum, the educational supervision, and their academic advisement. Also included is a Z-test comparison of the class means.

Statistical Analysis of the First Null Hypothesis

To the first question regarding satisfaction with the field experience: "My field placement met all of my expectations," thirty-eight first year students and fifty-four second year students strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the field placement met their expectations. Sixteen first year and fifteen second year students answered they

were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied. One first year and three first year students were undecided.

In the test of the first question on agency satisfaction, the outcome was: "Retain the null hypothesis at the .0500 level of significance because X} of 1.000478 is < the critical value of 3.842000." The degrees of freedom (df) = 1, and the P value was + 0.31718.

In tabular format, the findings were:

Table 1

Chi-Square Analysis of Data Concerning Student Satisfaction with Field Placement

---

df = 1

= 0.05 X} >= 3.8410

f(e)

40.39 13.61

51.61 17.39

RETAIN THE NULL HYPOTHESIS AT THE .0500 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE X} OF 1.000478 IS < THE CRITICAL VALUE OF 3.841000.

P VALUE + 0.31718

Statistical Analysis of the Second Null Hypothesis

The second question relating to satisfaction with the agency field supervision that the students received was: "The agency supervision I received was of great assistance." In answer to this question, forty first year and fifty-five second year students answered that they were strongly

satisfied or satisfied. Fourteen students were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied and twelve second year students reported the same response. Three first year and three second year students were undecided.

The result of the Chi-Square test on the agency supervision question was: "Retain the null hypothesis at the .05000 level of significance because X} or 1.138718 is < the critical value of 3.841000. The degrees of freedom (df) = 1, and the P value was: 0.28593. In tabular format, the results were:

Table 2

Chi-Square Analysis of Data Concerning Student Satisfaction with Agency Supervision Received

---

df = 1

F = 0.05 X} >= 3.8410

f(e)

42.40 11.60
52.60 14.40

RETAIN THE NULL HYPOTHESIS AT THE .0500 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE X} OF 1.138717 IS < THE CRITICAL VALUE OF 3.841000.

P VALUE = 0.28593

Statistical Analysis of the Third Null Hypothesis

The outcome of the third question concerned student attitudes toward the faculty advisement they received. The

question was: "My faculty advisor at school was of great assistance to me in reference to my field placement." The responses to this question were that thirty-three first year and forty-three second year students were strongly satisfied or satisfied. Comparatively, eighteen of the first year students were strongly dissatisfied or dissatisfied and nineteen second year students gave the same responses. In this instance, six first year students and eight second year students were undecided.

Similarly, the analysis of the satisfaction of students with their faculty advisement resulted in the following: "Retain the null hypothesis at the .0500 level of significance because X) of 0.274622 is < the critical value of 3.841000. Here, the degrees of freedom (df) = 1, and the P value was: 0.60025.

Table 3

Chi-Square Analysis of Data Concerning Student Satisfaction with Faculty Advisor

df = 1

α = 0.05 X) >= 3.8410

f(e)	
34.30	16.70
41.70	20.30

RETAIN THE NULL HYPOTHESIS AT THE .0500 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE X) OF 0.274622 IS < THE CRITICAL VALUE OF 3.841000.

P VALUE = 0.60025

Statistical Analysis of the Comparison of the Means

The fourth test compared the means of ages of the first and second year students. A two-tailed Z-test at the .05 level of significance was used. The range of ages was from twenty-three to fifty-eight years. The mean age was thirty-one. The median age was thirty-eight and the modal age was twenty-six.

After the data was analyzed, the instruction was received to: "Retain the null hypothesis at the .0500 level of significance because Z of -0.595552 is < the critical value of -1.960000." In this case, the P value was: 0.551477.

In tabular format, the findings from the Z-test were:

Table 4

Z-Test Analysis of the Comparison of Means Between First and Second Year Students

TWO-TAILED TEST

	SAMPLE 1		SAMPLE 2
n =	36	n =	36
X =	1.61111	X -	1.88889
s =	1.85592	s =	2.09459
s} =	3.44444	s} =	4.38730

RETAIN THE NULL HYPOTHESIS AT THE .0500 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE Z OF -0.595552 IS < THE CRITICAL VALUE OF -1.960000.

P VALUE = 0.551477

Summary of Findings

In summary, the results of the statistical analysis of the data in the questionnaires indicated that students did not differ greatly in their attitudes toward their placements, agency supervisors, and faculty advisement. The comparison of means indicated that the two groups were not statistically different from one another as to distribution in reference to their ages.

Looking at the findings more closely, students in both years were somewhat more satisfied with the agency supervision than they were with the agency placements. Second year students were somewhat more satisfied than were first year students.

Of the three key areas, students were not as satisfied with their faculty advisement. Second year students were somewhat more satisfied than first year students were. Also, among those second year students who were dissatisfied they were somewhat more so than the first year students. The greatest number of "undecided" responses, fourteen, appeared in reference to faculty advisement. Also, several comments to the open-ended question indicated that students had not had any contact with their faculty advisors and the faculty advisors had not visited the agencies.

The research hypothesis for this practicum was that: "There is no significant difference between first and second year graduate students in reference to their levels of satisfaction." The analysis of the data indicated that

there was no significant statistical difference upon which to base the rejection of the three null hypotheses regarding satisfaction levels. The Z-test indicated that the means of the two groups were statistically comparable as to their ages.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The results of this practicum were related to the purpose which was to assess the levels of satisfaction with the practicum, field instruction and faculty advisement at UCONN. Through the process of surveying all full-time practicum students, the research hypothesis regarding whether there were statistically significant differences between two classes was able to be tested. Data was gathered about a number of questions relating to student satisfaction with the practicum educational portion of the Master of Social Work degree program.

The Literature Search

For this practicum, the literature search was of value because studies and concepts were identified which related to student satisfaction in schools of higher education. Current social work articles were identified about studies being done related to student satisfaction with the practicum process.

Second, the literature review was of value because it identified models such as the "ITP" which could be used to improve practicum education. These models were directly related to the purpose of the practicum study and the

functions of various types of research such as ex-post facto which can be used for educational change.

Third, the practicum was related to the specific situation at UCONN. It is important to design specific measures to test student satisfaction with the curriculum as changes in the external and internal environment of a school take place. In this situation, it was important to test whether there was, indeed, a statistical difference in the attitudes of first and second year students so that institutional changes could be instituted as needed.

Thus, there was an interrelationship between the purpose of the literature review, the practicum and the statistical study. The data from more than half of the student body was studied and analyzed. While the conclusions, implications, and recommendations derived from the assessment results are restricted by the assumptions and limitations listed earlier in the practicum report, they are important to the planning process of the school.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings of this statistical survey, two general conclusions can be reached.

The responses indicated that within the group of students who replied to the questionnaire, the field placements, field supervision, and faculty advisement generally met their expectations. There was no significant difference in the attitudes of second year students over the opinions of first year students.

The second key conclusion, based upon the findings is that the survey met the expectations for which it was designed. The intention of the study was to begin to gather hard data about the attitudes of students toward several parts of the practicum process. There are the previously stated limitations that those students who did not answer may have done so because of their reservations about the practicum education. However, the data which was obtained will be valuable in discussion with various planning groups. Specific discussions can take place about the findings regarding agencies, field supervision, and the quality of faculty advisement.

Implications

Several implications emerged directly from the conclusions as the data was studied more thoroughly. First, based on the data, several types of additional analysis of the findings can be done. Specific satisfaction studies could be done by cohorts such as by age groups, gender and ethnicity. Comparisons could be made by other demographic factors such as majors, minors and year, gender, and ethnicity using various combinations of factors of the data already collected.

Related surveys can be focused specifically on the additional questions in the survey. these concern the amount of work expected, the assistance from agency personnel, the attitude of other social workers in the

agency, the services provided by the agency and the satisfaction level of the clients served by the agency.

Additional questions could be developed to refine the responses concerning agency supervision. These would include factors about the improvement of practice skills and the integration of classroom theory by the agency supervisor. This type of study would relate to the work cited in the literature search by Vayda and Bogo.

Finally, a number of issues could be raised as to the effectiveness of the faculty advisement which students received. As the satisfaction scores were lower and the responses to the "undecided category" were higher than for the other questions, this may be an area for further study.

Curriculum implications could be raised from the responses to other questions. For instance, questions were raised about the integration of classroom material with field agency experience by the classroom teachers. The converse was raised about the integration of agency practice to classroom theory by the field supervisor. Further studies in either of these areas could be done to amplify the findings and seek suggestions as to how this might be done in an andrologogical setting where the mean age of the student body is thirty-one.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made as a direct result of this practicum:

1. It is recommended that further studies of this kind be made on an annual basis so as to begin to collect data which could be used to improve the practicum and advisement process.
2. It is recommended that detailed research studies be developed within the Field Education Department in conjunction with the Research Sequence of UCONN to refine further some of the findings about the demographic factors and level of satisfaction of the student cohorts identified.
3. It is recommended that the findings which relate to the curriculum issues related to the articulation of field and classroom teaching be studied more thoroughly by the faculty, educational policy committee, field education advisory committee and the Deans for planning purposes.
4. It is recommended that the annual Field Education Department report which will be written this Fall be disseminated to the faculty, administration, student body and field agencies. The results of this study should be included in summarized form.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

FIELD EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The Field Education Department has been conducting a series of surveys this year with agency executives, field instructors, alumni, and the faculty. The following questionnaire was designed to gather data from a fifth group, social work students who are presently in first and second year field placements. Your part in this fact-gathering process is very important. The findings will be combined with the other surveys to prepare a report for the faculty and administration. We are moving in the direction of improving the field eduation experience. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. Return it to the Field Education Department, Room 317.

Identifying information:

Age:_____ Gender: Female____ Male:_____

Race/Ethnicity: White ____ African-American ____

African ____ West Indian ____ Hispanic/Latino ____

Asian ____ Other ____

Major: CW___ GW___ CO___ P/P___ ADM___

Minor: CW___ GW___ CO___ P/P___ ADM___ Research____

Student Status: First year____ Second year _____

Are you currently in a field placement? Yes____ No___

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the following questions on the answer sheet by indicating which number is closest to your attitude about several parts of your field agency experience this year.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Undecided	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

_____ 1. My field placement met all of my expectations.

_____ 2. The amount of work expected of me in the field agency was just right.

_____ 3. The assistance from agency personnel was very helpful.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Somewhat Agree	3 Undecided	4 Somewhat Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree

_____ 4. I was impressed postitively by the attitude of the other social workers in the agency toward ne as a student social worker.

_____ 5. In general, the social work services provided by my field agency were of high quality.

_____ 6. In general, the clientele of the agency were very satisfied by the services they received.

_____ 7. The agency supervision I received was of great assistance.

_____ 8. Through the field education supervision, I was able to improve my practice skills greatly.

_____ 9. The field supervisor related the agency experience closely to my classroom studies at the School.

_____ 10. My classroom teachers related their material closely to my field agency experience.

_____ 11. My faculty advisor at school was of great assistance to me in reference to my field placement.

_____ 12. Faculty members other than my faculty advisor were of great assistance to me in reference to my field placement.

_____ 13. My fellow students were of great assistance to me in reference to my field agency placement.

14. Other comments_____

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